

7th Grade: Discernment

OVERVIEW

OBJECTIVE:

To be inspired to answer the call to holiness now.

MAIN CONCEPTS:

1. We are all called to holiness.
2. The “Universal Call to Holiness” is God’s call to every person to live in an intimate relationship with Him, thus sharing in the life and mission of Jesus.
3. Our most basic vocation can be lived right now.
4. Our particular vocation will be the foundation of our identity.

PLANNING DIRECTIONS:

Choose the components you wish to use given the time you have and the needs of your students.

INTRODUCTION

2 min

Summarize today’s theme.

Through these vocation lessons we hope to become familiar with the different kinds of vocations to which God calls people. Today’s focus is on discerning the possible vocation which will bring you happiness and help you serve others.

OPENING PRAYER

2 min

Let us draw near to God during today’s lesson. In writing to the Corinthians, Paul says:

“Do you not know that the runners in the stadium all run in the race, but only one wins the prize? Run so as to win. Every athlete exercises discipline in every way. They do it to win a perish-

DISCERNMENT

“Do you not know that the runners in the stadium all run in the race, but only one wins the prize? Run so as to win. Every athlete exercises discipline in every way. They do it to win a perishable crown, but we an imperishable one. Thus I do not run aimlessly; I do not fight as if I were shadowboxing. No, I drive my body and train it, for fear that, after having preached to others, I myself should be disqualified.” - 1 CORINTHIANS 9:24-27

OPENING ACTIVITY

PRAY. LISTEN. ACT. REPEAT.

At the heart of vocation is a relationship with Jesus Christ. In preparation for thinking about answering God’s call, watch and reflect on the following video clip.



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=43Ntqvq-T8Q>

How does the slogan “pray, listen, act, repeat” apply to your own life?

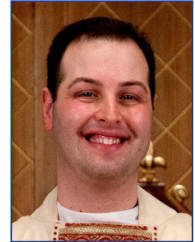
What are some practical ways you can begin to develop these habits?

ESTABLISHING THE CONCEPTS

FATHER MATTHEW GUIDI

St. Thomas the Apostle, West Springfield, MA

I come from a pretty religious family that was not perfect but took its faith seriously. Going to Mass on a regular basis was an important thing that we did as a family. My parents have been married for nearly 35 years, and I am the oldest of 6 children.



My faith life changed significantly during my junior to senior year in high school. I attended a powerful, life-changing retreat my senior year. This retreat led me to reflect on the most important question at hand: what is God asking me to do with my life? It was also around this time that a priest told me that he thought that I might have a vocation to priesthood based upon some of the questions that I would ask him. I was afraid to seriously consider a vocation to the priesthood because I initially wanted to get married and have a family.

God had bigger plans in store for me, however. Several events led me to seriously consider the priesthood.

During my sophomore year of college, I can remember making a decision one day that I wanted to start attending Mass on a regular basis. I also felt a need to go to confession for the first time in about two years. This entire process starting taking place around the time of September 11, 2001. It was at this particular time when I thought to myself that maybe God was calling me to be a priest. I wanted to be happy and virtuous, but nothing seemed to be filling the void that I was experiencing in my life. I started to pray more and asked God what He wanted me to do with my life. One evening, after a moment of deep prayer, I asked God if He wanted me to be a priest, and, if the answer was yes, that I would be won out of love for Him. At that very moment I experienced such a peace and joy that the world simply cannot give. I knew that I had to pursue

VOCATION LESSONS | 7th Grade: Discernment

able crown, but we an imperishable one. Thus I do not run aimlessly; I do not fight as if I were shadowboxing. No, I drive my body and train it, for fear that, after having preached to others, I myself should be disqualified.” - 1 CORINTHIANS 9:24-27

Pray a simple prayer from the heart or:

Lord, we want to live life as if we were running toward you as a prize. Help us to see our life in perspective of heaven and be earnest in our pursuit of holiness here and now. AMEN

OPENING ACTIVITY

10 min

Watch the video clip, and discuss with students.

ESTABLISHING THE CONCEPTS

20 min

Have students read the following vocation stories about young people and how they discerned their vocations. Note similarities and differences between them. Discuss using the questions at the end of the section.

DISCERNMENT

"Do you not know that the runners in the stadium all run in the race, but only one wins the prize? Run so as to win. Every athlete exercises discipline in every way. They do it to win a perishable crown, but we an imperishable one. Thus I do not run aimlessly; I do not fight as if I were shadowboxing. No, I drive my body and train it, for fear that, after having preached to others, I myself should be disqualified." - 1 CORINTHIANS 9:24-27

OPENING ACTIVITY

PRAY. LISTEN. ACT. REPEAT.

At the heart of vocation is a relationship with Jesus Christ. In preparation for thinking about answering God's call, watch and reflect on the following video clip.



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=43Ntqvq-T8Q>

How does the slogan "pray, listen, act, repeat" apply to your own life?

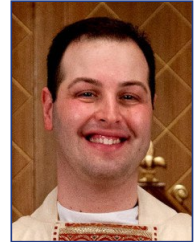
What are some practical ways you can begin to develop these habits?

ESTABLISHING THE CONCEPTS

FATHER MATTHEW GUIDI

St. Thomas the Apostle, West Springfield, MA

I come from a pretty religious family that was not perfect but took its faith seriously. Going to Mass on a regular basis was an important thing that we did as a family. My parents have been married for nearly 35 years, and I am the oldest of 6 children.



My faith life changed significantly during my junior to senior year in high school. I attended a powerful, life-changing retreat my senior year. This retreat led me to reflect on the most important question at hand: what is God asking me to do with my life? It was also around this time that a priest told me that he thought that I might have a vocation to priesthood based upon some of the questions that I would ask him. I was afraid to seriously consider a vocation to the priesthood because I initially wanted to get married and have a family.

God had bigger plans in store for me, however. Several events led me to seriously consider the priesthood.

During my sophomore year of college, I can remember making a decision one day that I wanted to start attending Mass on a regular basis. I also felt a need to go to confession for the first time in about two years. This entire process started taking place around the time of September 11, 2001. It was at this particular time when I thought to myself that maybe God was calling me to be a priest. I wanted to be happy and virtuous, but nothing seemed to be filling the void that I was experiencing in my life. I started to pray more and asked God what He wanted me to do with my life. One evening, after a moment of deep prayer, I asked God if He wanted me to be a priest, and, if the answer was yes, that I would be won out of love for Him. At that very moment I experienced such a peace and joy that the world simply cannot give. I knew that I had to pursue





ESTABLISHING THE CONCEPTS *continued*

further discernment to the priesthood. I have been discerning priesthood ever since, and there have been many challenges and hardships for me along the journey of discernment. However, these years have been the most fulfilling and joyful years of my life. In particular, strong devotions to our Lord Jesus Christ in the Most Holy Eucharist and to the Blessed Virgin Mary have truly helped me to persevere in pursuing the priestly vocation.

I applied to seminary shortly after I graduated from Our Lady of the Elms College in 2006. I was ordained in June of 2012.

My greatest joys of priesthood are celebrating the Mass, preaching, hearing confessions, anointing the sick, pastoral counseling, and just making myself available to help others in any capacity. I am a people person and get excited at the opportunity to make new friends and bring the person of Christ and the Gospel message to others. In turn, the people of God have been tremendously good to me and a true joy to serve. I love my people with all my heart!

I advise any man discerning a call to priesthood to pray, pray, and pray some more. When you pray, do not ask for your own will but in humility, sincerity, and truth ask God to reveal His plan for you in your life. If when you think about being a priest, a continual sense of peace and joy remain, then that's a good sign that you are being called to priesthood. Following God's will leads to peace and joy, fruits of the Holy Spirit, and indications that we are following His will in our lives.

SISTER MARGARET MARY (MEG) Stockton, CA

Although I was blessed to grow up in a devout Catholic family, I decided at quite a young age that I did not want to be a nun. I persisted in this conviction until, in my sophomore year of high school, I attended a Profession ceremony of the Missionaries of Charity. Seeing the radical example of lives given entirely to God, I recognized in my own soul the desire to give everything to Him in love. Nonetheless, I was terrified at the possibility that this might mean I had a religious vocation and tried without success to dismiss the idea from my mind. As I reluctantly began to



research various religious orders, I was drawn increasingly to the beauty of the religious life. Yet still I was torn between my own desires and what I thought God's plan for me might be. Finally, the dear Lord gave me the grace to surrender my will entirely to His. Immediately my fears fell away from me, and I was filled with peace. Soon after that, I discovered the Dominican Sisters of Mary, Mother of the Eucharist, and attended the February 2012 retreat. Upon seeing my Sisters, I felt sure that this was the life and the community to which God, in His unfathomable love, was calling me. As I recall the story of my vocation, I am filled with joyous gratitude that God has so wonderfully drawn my heart to His own!

SISTER KELLY North Royalton, OH

FIAT! The Annunciation has been part of my prayer and reflection the past few years. Looking back at my life thus far, I see how God has been drawing me closer to Him, most recently through His Mother, Mary, and His presence in the Blessed Sacrament. It was in adoration at a retreat years back where I thought God might be calling me to religious life, but I never did anything about it.

However, the thought never left my mind. It was in adoration years later, where I continued to feel a tug on my heart, a thirst, and a desire to love and please our Lord. I'm excited to fall more in love with our Lord and our faith and hopefully help others to do the same! I thank God and our Lady for all the people they have placed in my path to help me along the way, all my friends, family, priests, and my spiritual director Fr. Damian Ference. God is good. "Each moment is an annunciation offering us the chance to bring Christ into the world through every word and action. Respond to the invitation and say YES." FIAT! [Bowling Green State University]



originally from
<https://www.sistersofmary.org/vocations/vocation-stories.html>

ALTERNATIVE VIDEO

15 min

Watch the video, and discuss with students.

EXPLORATION

15 min

PRACTICE EVANGELIZATION

In groups or pairs, have the students act out a scenario of telling a friend about the call to holiness.



DISCERNMENT

ESTABLISHING THE CONCEPTS *continued*

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Fr. Guidi

1. What caused Fr. Guidi's life to change significantly in high school? How was this event different from the "faith life" he had as a child?
2. Why was Fr. Guidi initially afraid of becoming a priest?
3. Name two events which led to Fr. Guidi seriously considering the priesthood? (hint: The events happened during his sophomore year of college)
4. Name two of Father Guidi's greatest joys.

Sr. Meg

5. What initially caused Sr. Meg to recognize in her own soul the desire to give everything to God? Was she still afraid?
6. What calmed Sr. Meg's fears?

Sr. Kelly

7. Who are two important figures that draw Sr. Kelly closer to God in her vocation?
8. What is Sr. Kelly excited to do?
9. What does Sr. Kelly feel is "an annunciation offering us the chance to bring Christ into the world"?
10. How are the three stories similar? What are their differences?

EXPLORATION

ROLE PLAY - "I'M CONSIDERING RELIGIOUS LIFE!"

1. Determine a setting (on a sidewalk coming home from school, in the bleachers after a track meet, around a kitchen table, at a pizza party, etc.).
2. Establish the actors and their message:
One actor is sharing about how he or she is growing in faith and considering a vocation within the Church.
The other actor is seeking meaning in life and wants to know how he or she can draw closer to God.
3. Imagine their conversation, and then act it out with a loose script or improvisation.

ALTERNATIVE VIDEO

THE VOCATION STORY OF SISTER MARIS STELLA



Video is available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=80ms1R5Zs6s>

1. What is the most interesting part of sister's story?
2. What did you think about the part where she says she could be happy as a married person? Why did she choose religious life instead?
3. Do you think other people would be inspired by Sr. Maris Stella? Why or why not?



REFLECTIVE PRAYER

5 min.

WORLD YOUTH DAY

1. Introduce this time as a meditation on Pope Francis' challenge to be a ray of light to the world.
Now is a prayerful time for you to internally interact with God.
2. Have the students silently read the quotes from Pope Francis. They can underline parts that speak to them, write about ways they can carry it out, think about Jesus being with them as they witness, or internally converse with Our Lord.

VOCAL PRAYER

2 min

Come, Holy Spirit

1. Direct the students to look over the prayer.
2. Students pray the vocation prayer:
Come, Holy Spirit.



DISCERNMENT

REFLECTIVE PRAYER

At World Youth Day in 2013, Pope Francis spoke to the youth of the world, saying:

"You too, dear young people, can be joyful witnesses of his love, courageous witnesses of his Gospel, carrying to this world a ray of his light."

"Do not be afraid to go and to bring Christ into every area of life, to the fringes of society, even to those who seem farthest away, most indifferent."

"The Church needs you, your enthusiasm, your creativity, and the joy that is so characteristic of you."

"Do not be afraid! When we go to proclaim Christ, it is he himself who goes before us and guides us. When he sent his disciples on mission, he promised: 'I am with you always' (Mt 28:20). And this is also true for us! Jesus does not leave us alone, he never leaves you alone! He always accompanies you."

"So if you have not committed to fully living who you are as a Christian, to following the call to holiness, do it now. Start today!"



VOCAL PRAYER

Come, Holy Spirit

Come Holy Spirit, fill the hearts
of your faithful and kindle in
them the fire of your love.
Send forth your Spirit and they
shall be created. And You shall
renew the face of the earth.

O, God, who by the light of the
Holy Spirit, did instruct the
hearts of the faithful,
grant that by the same
Holy Spirit we may be truly wise
and ever enjoy His consolations,
Through Christ Our Lord,
AMEN.